



Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5862nd meeting

Tuesday, 8 April 2008, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Kumalo	(South Africa)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Belle
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The question concerning Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (S/2008/202)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President: As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of April 2008, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of March 2008. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Churkin for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The question concerning Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (S/2008/202)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Haiti in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Cazeau (Haiti), took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Hédi Annabi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Annabi to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/202, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Hédi Annabi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. I now give the floor to Mr. Annabi.

Mr. Annabi: I am very pleased to be back in the Security Council today and to have the opportunity to update members of the Council on the work of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in accordance with the mandate entrusted to it under resolution 1780 (2007), which was adopted last October.

In Haiti today we face a time of opportunity, which is also a time of risk. As reflected in the report (S/2008/202) before the Council, we are encouraged by the political, security and institution-building progress to date and by initial signs of improvement in the socio-economic situation. Those gains are real and significant, but we must also recognize that they are only a first step, that that progress remains extraordinarily fragile and subject to swift reversal and that we have far to go before it can be considered to be durable and sustainable. As an introduction to this morning's discussion, it may be useful to share with the Council our thinking on the way forward.

The foundation of any durable progress in Haiti will remain the existence of a minimal level of political consensus in the country. To date, the current Government, which came to office in June 2006 through an electoral process that was strongly supported by MINUSTAH, has sought to promote such a consensus, and it generally continues to enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of the public. It has relied on that legitimacy to begin to address a number of key issues, including the strengthening of State institutions and the fight against corruption and impunity. President René Préval and Prime Minister Jacques Édouard Alexis have taken a very clear stand in that regard.

While this political consensus remains vital, it is also extremely fragile. There are clear and continuing

threats that democratic debate could relapse into political infighting and instability and that that could in turn generate violence. Over the past six months, tensions between individual political actors and among the various branches of the Government have at times threatened to escalate and to undermine public confidence. The potential for a deterioration in relations was made clear by the *interpellation* — the summoning — of the Prime Minister before the Chamber of Deputies in late February. While the majority of deputies voted in support of the Prime Minister, that process was a clear reminder of the degree to which collaboration remains fragile.

Still more recently, we saw a dramatic indication of the potential for problems, when a shooting took place in parliament during a debate related to investigations into alleged spending irregularities by legislators. Further problems may lie ahead, related, *inter alia*, to continuing inquiries over the possession of double nationality by legislators and Government officials, over the question of constitutional reform and over the preparation of elections for one third of the Senate. Furthermore, the current unrest that we are seeing in various parts of the country, which is frequently presented as demonstrations against *la vie chère* — the high cost of living — also appear to have a political dimension, in addition to expressing mounting frustrations about the rising cost of basic food commodities.

MINUSTAH will continue to do what it can to promote constructive dialogue, but it is also incumbent upon the wider international community to actively encourage a responsible approach by all political actors. Ultimately, political progress will depend upon the Haitians themselves. While moments of tension will be inevitable, it is crucial that political leaders and opinion makers rise to the occasion and show restraint and a genuine desire for collaboration and dialogue.

Overall, the country's democratic structures must be strengthened and nurtured, in order to favour a greater institutionalization of dialogue and to help break a tradition of politically motivated violence. It is also essential that the country's basic administrative capacities be enhanced, so that essential services can be provided to the population. MINUSTAH can provide a small portion of the assistance that is required, and it will continue to support the local authorities. It will also continue to work towards the strengthening of national capabilities in such key areas as border management. But coordinated bilateral aid will remain vital to enable real and durable progress.

In the area of security there have also been important gains over the reporting period, alongside warning signs that the situation remains fragile and that further efforts are required. The sustained security operations conducted by MINUSTAH in the first part of last year against gangs in Port-au-Prince and Gonaïves in support of the Haitian authorities continue to bear fruit today. The overall security situation in the country remains far better than it was, but we have also seen a resurgence of kidnapping in the past few months. An average of about 30 kidnappings has been registered per month during the period from December 2007 to the end of March 2008.

Those numbers are becoming a political liability for both the Government and MINUSTAH. There are also recurrent indications that gangs may be trying to reorganize themselves. Those kinds of threats, which appear essentially criminal in nature, may be — and often are — manipulated for political purposes.

At the same time, we have seen a rise in anti-Government demonstrations, with a particular focus on the recent dramatic increase in the cost of living, as I mentioned earlier. The potential security implications of such unrest were made clear last week, when such demonstrations required the evacuation of our offices in Les Cayes, in the south of the country. Similar demonstrations, albeit less violent, also took place last week in Gonaïves, Port-au-Prince and a few other locations.

Because of the violence that has occurred in the past, the Haitian public is particularly sensitive to threats of instability. A firm and visible response is essential and can only be achieved through collaboration between the Haitian authorities and MINUSTAH, whose military and police are playing a critical role.

In order to combat the threat of criminality and violence, we have reinforced our collaboration with the Haitian authorities and enhanced sharing of information. We have stepped up the presence of checkpoints throughout Port-au-Prince, where most of the kidnappings have taken place, and we are working to enhance the investigative and response capabilities of our police, an area where we will need the continued help of police-contributing countries to obtain the necessary skills that MINUSTAH currently lacks. At the same time, our formed police units are working closely with their Haitian counterparts to respond to incidents of civil unrest.

The Mission is also reinforcing its presence along the land and maritime borders of Haiti, as mandated under resolution 1780 (2007). Our objective is to support the extension of State authority in the area and to help the Government to deter smuggling or illicit trafficking in drugs and arms that could have implications for the security of the country. As reflected in the report, we are now deployed at the four main crossing points along the land border and are undertaking regular land patrols on the coastline and joint maritime patrols aboard Haitian coast guard vessels, pending deployment of our own maritime capabilities. However, real effectiveness in this area will necessarily depend on complementary bilateral assistance to the Haitian authorities from Member States in the region and beyond.

Alongside their role in responding to threats, our military and police have also provided assistance in times of urgent humanitarian crises. Their resourcefulness and dedication have made a crucial difference in that regard.

We have also launched a series of innovative community violence reduction projects that we believe can make a genuine difference on the ground. By providing immediate employment through small-scale projects, those efforts can breathe some desperately needed hope into troubled areas and help diminish the economic pressures that fuel constant cycles of violence. They support the reintegration of some of those who have been involved in lesser criminal activities by including them in the workforce. They also help generate some tangible improvements in the daily lives of communities at risk. I personally visited six of those projects last month in Cité Soleil and Martissant and was encouraged to see that, after some delays, that community violence reduction programme is now on track.

The consolidation of security will require, of course, the creation of viable Haitian rule-of-law structures that can progressively assume more responsibilities as their capacity increases. Over the past six months, some progress has taken place, but much more remains to be done to reach the benchmarks noted in the report.

MINUSTAH has been working closely with the Haitian authorities to implement the Haitian National Police reform plan. Some 8,450 officers are now in service, approximately 1,000 of whom are undertaking functions other than policing, such as those of corrections personnel, the coast guard and the fire

brigade. While that represents a substantial step forward, it is far short of the minimum of 14,000 officers who are required to ensure basic policing functions, according to the Haitian National Police reform plan. MINUSTAH will continue its efforts to assist in the professionalization of the police and its institutional development, but complementary bilateral support will obviously remain indispensable to meeting the outstanding needs of the police, including in key areas such as infrastructure, transport, telecommunications and other equipment.

Similarly, the adoption last December of three critical laws on the independence of the judiciary and of national reform plans for the justice and penal systems, drawing on strong support from MINUSTAH, can pave the way for progress. But continued, coordinated efforts will be essential to turning those blueprints into reality. Sustained engagement by the Haitian political leadership will be necessary to put in place the Superior Council of the Judiciary and the School for Magistrates, which are of key importance. Priority must also be given to short- and medium-term steps to address the situation in the prison system, which is unacceptable from both a security and human rights perspective. Here again, bilateral assistance is indispensable to providing the additional resources, skills and equipment that are required for even basic effectiveness.

Finally, the socio-economic situation also presents a mixed picture. While such problems do not fall directly within the mandated responsibilities of MINUSTAH, it is clear that stability and development are inextricably linked.

Haiti has made significant progress in stabilizing the economy, and real gross domestic product (GDP) growth is estimated to have risen to 3.2 per cent in 2007, which brings Haiti, in terms of overall level of the GDP, back to the level of 1991. The annual inflation rate declined to about 8 per cent last year, down from 30 to 40 per cent a few years earlier, and the currency has remained stable. The Government has prepared a national growth and poverty reduction strategy paper which embodies Haiti's development priorities and should form the basis for future assistance strategies, starting with the discussions that are expected to take place on 24 and 25 April 2008 in Port-au-Prince.

All of that is encouraging, but it has not yet brought about any immediate improvement in the difficult living conditions of the vast majority of the population, who have in fact experienced additional

hardship as a result of the significant increases in prices of a number of staple commodities over recent months. That has generated growing public discontent over what is called in Haiti "la vie chère", which has a clear potential to undermine all of our stabilization efforts.

In that context, it is urgent that donor countries, the international financial institutions and the private sector, including Haitians living abroad, work with the Haitian authorities to find creative ways to generate what I call a stability dividend — in other words, an immediate and tangible improvement in socio-economic conditions that can allow the stabilization process to advance.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that we still have far to go in Haiti. As noted in the report, the Haitian authorities have primary responsibility for the stabilization process. However, it is equally obvious — and the Haitian authorities themselves are very clear on this point — that they cannot do it alone. They will continue to need substantial external assistance. Similarly, the continued presence of a peacekeeping operation is indispensable, and it must be supplemented by the sustained and coordinated efforts of bilateral donors and the wider international community.

Our common objective must be one of crossing a definitive threshold of stability that would obviate the need for a future peacekeeping operation in Haiti. In line with the Security Council request made in paragraph 22 of resolution 1780 (2007), the present report provides some initial proposals on benchmarks by which consolidation of the stabilization process might be measured in each of the key areas of our mandate. We have identified five such benchmarks.

First, the area of political progress could include the completion of the new electoral cycle, which begins this year with the senatorial elections and should culminate in a peaceful transition to a democratically elected president and parliament in 2011.

Secondly, a sustainable security structure should be created, one capable of responding to threats while respecting professional standards.

Thirdly, key elements of an independent and credible judicial and penal system that upholds human rights standards should be established.

Fourthly and more generally, the establishment throughout the country of a functioning administration that can deliver basic services, including an effective border management strategy, is essential.

Finally, palpable improvements in the living conditions of the general population and positive growth in gross domestic product for a number of years, as well as a significant rise in employment and in the level of investments, are key indicators that, we believe, the Security Council should keep in mind as it takes decisions regarding the future of its involvement in Haiti.

In a rapidly changing and often difficult environment, it is important to avoid the trap of premature optimism or, alternatively, disproportionate discouragement in the face of inevitable setbacks. I believe that we must stay the course and stay focused on the reality that this is probably an exceptional moment of opportunity for Haiti to escape the destructive cycles of the past. We need to work together to ensure that this opportunity is seized, that the country's emerging stability is consolidated and that firm foundations are laid for a better future.

Let me thank you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Council for your strong support for Haiti. Your support will remain key to MINUSTAH's success as we continue our work on the challenging road ahead of us.

The President: I thank Mr. Annabi for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.